

HYDROPOWER POTENTIAL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, a strong economy needs affordable, abundant, and reliable energy. In recent years, Americans have experienced higher prices for energy across the spectrum. This has led to an enormous growth in private and public research and development of innovative and advanced energy technologies. These innovative technologies include fuel from algae, solar, and wind generation, battery manufacturing, advanced nuclear, and many others.

I recently had an opportunity to visit with Virgil Vanderloo, of Ackley, IA. It was immediately apparent that Virgil has a passion for new and innovative ideas regarding hydroelectric power generation. Virgil does not have an engineering background he is a retired farmer. For 30 years he farmed land in Hardin, Plymouth, and Woodbury Counties. It is because of this time as a farmer that Virgil came to appreciate the land and its rich natural resources. Now, he is pursuing a concept to capture the power from our Nation's rivers to generate electricity.

After speaking with Mr. Vanderloo and reviewing the material he compiled, he believes that his concept may have the potential to increase the production of hydroelectricity and capture a renewable energy source that currently goes uncollected. Mr. Vanderloo's concept includes placing barges below dams fitted with water turbines to produce electricity. He reasons that this type of electricity generation could be viable on the 30 or so dams along the Mississippi River. If viable, this concept could conceivably be implemented on many of the more than 50,000 nonpowered dams in the United States.

After all, the U.S. Department of Energy just last month published a study that indicated the United States could get as much as 12 gigawatts of energy per year by utilizing the hydropower potential of existing dams. The idea proposed by Virgil could be one the innovations in hydropower technologies that could help us use existing dams to generate renewable energy.

I would like to make an appeal to hydroelectric designers and engineers to review the concept presented by Mr. Vanderloo. I have posted his information on the Internet which can be accessed at <http://1.usa.gov/J1A5Ky>. I hope those with scientific and engineering expertise in this area will review his proposal and contact him directly. It may have promise, and I hope this brings attention to his ideas regarding hydroelectric power generation.

TAIWAN'S PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Madam President, January 14, 2012, marked Taiwan's fifth direct Presidential election, and on May 20, President Ma Ying-jeou will be

sworn in for his second and final term as the leader of our friend and ally Taiwan. I would like to congratulate President Ma on his reelection, and I would also like to congratulate Taiwan for its commitment to democracy.

Since the island's first Presidential elections in 1996, the people and Government of Taiwan have enthusiastically embraced democratic values and ideals. From extremely high rates of voter participation in elections to public and open political discourse and debate, signs of a vibrant democracy can be seen throughout Taiwan's society.

The January elections proved a continuation of Taiwan's commitment to a democratic form of government, and President Ma's reelection demonstrates the faith the people of Taiwan have in his leadership. I therefore close by urging all my colleagues to join me in congratulating President Ma on his second inauguration and Taiwan's people for their embrace of democracy. I look forward to continuing to work to advance the strong relationship between Taiwan and the United States and our common goals and interests.

TRIBUTE TO MERLE J. SMITH, JR.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, today I wish to pay tribute to Commander Merle J. Smith, Jr., of Mystic, CT, who was honored on April 1, 2012, during the Coast Guard's annual Eclipse Week, as the first African-American graduate of the Coast Guard Academy in 1966.

Founded in 1876 in New London, CT, the Coast Guard Academy has made fundamental progress since its first African-American cadet. Over the past decades, it has diversified its student body, provided support to underrepresented students, and raised awareness about the Coast Guard, its Academy, and military training more generally among a wide range of communities. Commander Smith was honored this year with the inaugural Merle J. Smith Pioneer Award as one of the first to realize the ideal of minority participation and for his contributions to our Nation since paving the way for future cadets on that infamous graduation day.

After leaving the Academy, Commander Smith served in Vietnam in 1969, commanding a patrol boat on more than 80 missions and becoming the first African-American member of the maritime service to earn a Bronze Star. While in the Coast Guard, he received a law degree from George Washington University, and after his military tenure, dedicated many years as an attorney for Groton-based Electric Boat. Commander Smith also taught at the Academy as a part-time law teacher and then later as an adjunct professor. He is a shining example of the wide range of possibilities offered to Academy graduates—whether they choose to pursue a career in the military, in a civilian profession, such as

the law, or both—and is a stellar role model for cadets past and present.

The Coast Guard and Coast Guard Academy began adopting equal opportunity policies in earnest when President Kennedy ordered the diversification of the forces defending our coasts. Now, each year, the Coast Guard hosts Eclipse Week, a week-long effort to put its diversity efforts in the spotlight. Discussions on openness and inclusivity are facilitated. Minority alumni are welcomed on campus to form relationships with current and incoming Academy students as well as interested high school students.

In addition to Commander Smith, the Coast Guard honored three other valuable members of their community—partners in the pursuit of equal representation—during this year's Eclipse Week. Frances Neal was awarded this year's Humanitarian Award for her legacy of lovingly serving food to cadets for 25 years. One of the Academy's most beloved equal opportunity officers, JoAnn P. Miller, or "Mama Miller," as she was affectionately called by cadets, was also celebrated. And, Vice Admiral Manson K. Brown, a student of Commander Smith's, was given this year's Genesis Award for his service as a Pacific Area commander and his work founding the Genesis Club while attending the Academy—an organization still in existence that supports underrepresented cadets.

The Coast Guard promotes diversity not only through Eclipse Week, but also by running community-based initiatives such as the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Diversity and its various programs, including Diversity Champion of the Week, Affinity Groups, and Strategic Education Partnerships. It also has an active Office of Inclusion and Diversity, headed by Chief Diversity Officer, Antonio Farias, that facilitates partnerships between high school and college students, as well as cadets, so that citizens of all backgrounds can see what it means to work towards a career in the Coast Guard and in the U.S. military. And, in 2011, Rear Admiral Sandra Stosz became the first female Service Academy superintendent in our Nation's history. She was recently named as one of *Newsweek's* "150 Women Who Shake the World." More than 30 years ago, Eclipse Week's goal was racial inclusivity. Today, this yearly event aims to promote diversity more comprehensively.

Displayed in the historical archive of the Coast Guard's Web site, is a photograph of Commander Smith on the day of his graduation, proudly shaking the hand of his father, Colonel Merle J. Smith, Sr., and smiling at the camera. This image speaks of generational advancement, community, and hope. However, the weathered sepia of the photograph of father and son also reminds us that we cannot become complacent, stuck in stories of progress from previous decades. We must always be ready, "*Semper Paratus*," for progress. The theme of this year's